

OUR GARDEN CRUSH

We're sure we'd find life **VERY RELAXING** if we could wander down the garden path to this sumptuous sunken seating space

Taking a stroll to the bottom of your garden for a quiet cuppa would be such a pleasure if you were the lucky owner of this generously sized outside space. "The sunken garden patio provides a private, unseen space and creates a really cosy feel," says its designer, Sean Butler of Cube 1994 Landscape Garden Design (cube1994.com). The low-level patio was a neat solution to a sloping plot but also elevates the sense of being hidden away from the rest of the world.

"Designing a third dimension into a garden stimulates your senses, and being able to view plants at eye level allows you to be able to get closer to nature in the comfort of a relaxing chair," explains Sean.

The design is practical too. "The wall doubles up as a seat when entertaining," he adds. "It's 45cm high, the perfect level to perch on, and the top coping makes it comfier."

A PLACE TO SWITCH OFF

The decision to site the main seating area at the bottom of this 850m² space came about on account of its south-east aspect. "The sun disappeared from the rear of the house in the early afternoon," explains Sean. "The clients wanted to use the garden primarily for relaxing and entertaining and, with Mr Smith commuting to London as a city trader, it was important to create an area that enjoyed the evening sun."

The journey to this end-of-the-day entertaining area was a vital part of the design, with a path tempting both the owners and their guests out of the house and into the garden. "The contemporary pergola was designed to frame the view down the path to the seating area," explains Sean.

The colour palette was kept to a tranquil mix of pale paving alongside planting in purples, mauves and shades of green. Swathes of *Verbena bonariensis* are used, with clipped box balls and feather reed-grass for year-round structure. This elegant planting combination was used to add a natural, airy screen along one side of the sunken seating area to enhance the feeling of being in a secret sanctuary.

The final touch is a steel onion filled with three tonnes of rainbow cobbles, which Sean designed. "The clients liked abstract sculpture and were very open to new ideas," he says.



The view down the path to the seating area is framed by the pergola



A refined colour palette of serene greens and peaceful purples sets a calming tone for this tranquil space.

Delphinium 'Purple Velvet'

Common yew

FEATURE: EMMA KENDELL. PHOTOS: GAP PHOTOS, SHUTTERSTOCK